

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 AF-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6083
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, RP, LY, XF
SUBJ: MINDANAO PLEBISCITE POSTPONED

REF: MANILA 2272

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS ANNOUNCED TODAY THAT PLEBISCITE
IN THE SOUTHERN PROVINCES, EARLIER SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 21,
HAD BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL MARCH 17. WHILE REASONS GIVEN FOR
THIS DECISION WERE ADMINISTRATIVE IN NATURE, IT APPEARS THAT
POSTPONEMENT HAS ITS ORIGINS IN SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION TO
PLEBISCITE ON THE PART OF MUSLIM PARTIES IN TRIPOLI. END SUMMARY

2. LATE AFTERNOON FEBRUARY 16 PRESIDENT MARCOS ANNOUNCED
POSTPONEMENT UNTIL MARCH 17 OF SOUTHERN PLEBISCITE EARLIER
SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 21. AT NAVY ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES
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EARLIER IN DAY, MARCOS, WHO APPEARED UNUSUALLY SUBDUED, ALERT-
ED AMBASSADOR TO POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT OF PLEBISCITE. FOREIGN
SECRETARY ROMULO ADDED THAT, ACCORDING TO LOCAL GOVERN-
MENT SECRETARY RONO, SOME OF SOUTHERN GOVERNORS FELT THE
TIME BEFORE THE PLEBISCITE WAS TOO SHORT FOR ADEQUATE PREPARATION.
ROMULO NOTED ALSO THAT THERE WAS GREAT CON-
FUSION REGARDING WHAT THE AFP ROLE, IF ANY, SHOULD BE IN

THE PLEBISCITE. MARCOS LATER SPOKE TO THE PRESS ABOUT A POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT, SAYING THAT HE HAD DIRECTED A QUICK SURVEY OF THE MINDANAO-SULU-PALAWAN AREAS AND THAT SOME OF HIS PEOPLE IN THESE AREAS HAD REQUESTED POSTPONEMENT BECAUSE THEY WISHED TO KNOW THE PLANS ON REGIONAL ORGANIZATION UNDER THE AUTONOMY LAW.

3. LATE YESTERDAY EVENING (FEBRUARY 15), ACCORDING TO RELIABLE MILITARY SOURCE, ALL AFP FORCES IN MINDANAO THEATER HAD BEEN PLACED ON "RED ALERT."

4. AT NAVY CEREMONIES LIBYAN CHARGE WAS SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT. HE CAME ABOARD THE PRESIDENTIAL YACHT WITH MRS. MARCOS AND THEN PARTICIPATED IN THE SIGNING OF A GOP-GOL CULTURAL AGREEMENT. SUBSEQUENTLY, HE HANDED AN AIDE-MEMOIRE TO ROMULO WHO READ IT SOBERLY AND THEN GAVE IT TO ENRILE.

5. ANOTHER CURIOUS INCIDENT TOOK PLACE DURING THE TELEVISED BATASAN BAYAN SESSION ON FEBRUARY 15. AN AFRICAN GENTLEMEN WHOM THE ANNOUNCER IDENTIFIED AS KARIM GAYE, WAS SEEN ENTERING THE CONFERENCE HALL, TAKING MARCOS ASIDE AND ENGAGING HIM IN A SERIOUS CONVERSATION. WE ARE STILL NOT CERTAIN WHETHER GAYE, THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE, WAS IN FACT HERE ON SOME SPECIAL MISSION. ROMULO MENTIONED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT GAYE HAD BEEN HERE BRIEFLY BUT HAD RETURNED TO JIDDA. MARCOS, ON THE OTHER HAND, SUGGESTED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE VISITOR WAS THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE CEASEFIRE REPRESENTATIVE, CONFIDENTIAL

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A SENEGALESE ALSO BY THE NAME OF GAYE WHOM WE BELIEVE IS RELATED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL.

6. COMMENT: PIECING THESE EVENTS TOGETHER, WE CONCLUDE THAT THE CURRENT TRIPOLI NEGOTIATIONS ARE LIKELY RUNNING INTO SERIOUS PROBLEMS AND THAT THE REPORTED OPPOSITION OF NUR MISUARI (AND POSSIBLY THE LIBYANS) TO A PLEBISCITE HAS REAL SUBSTANCE. WHILE THE ADMINISTRATION DIFFICULTIES OF HOLDING A PLEBISCITE ON SHORT NOTICE ARE SIGNIFICANT (AND PROVIDE MARCOS WITH A CREDIBLE COVER STORY), THE POSTPONEMENT LIKELY HAS ITS ORIGINS IN LACK OF AGREEMENT ON THIS MATTER IN TRIPOLI.
SULLIVAN

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